

Adjunct Staffer Loses Contract

Annette Rodriguez was told she was no longer welcome to teach at Northern New Mexico College

By Ralph Chapoco
SUN Staff Writer

When Northern New Mexico College adjunct faculty member Annette Rodriguez learned she was not on the approved faculty list, she wanted to know why, so she went on a quest to find the list, but was surprised by the outcome.

Rodriguez was a beloved instructor at Northern and she has the documentation to prove it, citing a letter that a student's mother wrote to the college.

"She was very patient with him and always being there for him with advice," Henrietta Gaines wrote about Rodriguez. "I want to thank her from the bottom of my heart for being there for my son as he undertakes his new journey in his life."

She has also received very positive student evaluations. Moreover, Lori Franklin, an associate professor at Northern, raved about her job performance. Franklin sent an email to Northern's Vice President of Institutional Advancement Ricky Serna, advocating on Rodriguez's behalf.

"First of all, if I had been consulted, I could have verified that Annette has an excellent record teaching as an adjunct for our department," Franklin wrote. "She has never neglected any of her responsibilities as an adjunct in any way. Also, I have never received a student complaint about Annette. In fact, a student was just in my office last week praising her abilities as an instructor. I review all student evaluations for my adjuncts, and she has received excellent evaluations every semester she has taught for Northern."

Because of her performance, Rodriguez was recommended to teach this summer as part of Northern's Summer Bridge program. She signed the contract immediately and waited for the hiring chair's signature so she could begin teaching. The contract was not official until Patricia Trujillo signed it. However, there were delays with the signature so Rodriguez could not begin teaching

for Summer Bridge.

She sent an email to Serna on May 2 to inquire about the contract. He responded on May 7 and informed her she is not approved and would not be teaching at the college anymore, effectively terminating her employment.

"The Personnel Action Form will not be signed and fully executed," Serna wrote. "You are no longer on the list of approved adjunct faculty. Thank you."

Rodriguez was unaware that such a list existed, so she requested the document through the Inspection of Public Records Act on May 21. Brandi Cordova, Northern's public records custodian, responded June 12 to the request.

"This letter is in response to your Inspection of Public Records Act request dated May 21, 2014 in which you requested the 'list of approved adjunct faculty,'" Cordova wrote. "Please be advised that no such document exists."

There is no formal list that names all adjunct faculty who are authorized to teach at the college. Instead, there were a series of

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List of Banned Teachers Could Not Be Found

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informal emails sent between department chairs and administrators regarding faculty who are barred from employment. An email from Anthony Sena, Northern's provost, to Franklin, confirmed as much.

"As a follow-up to David Barton's inquiry, the individuals listed below are not approved to teach courses in an adjunct basis within your department," Sena wrote. "Dr. Patricia Perca, Mr. Tim Crone, Ms. Annette Rodriguez."

Barton is an associate professor of English and humanities and director of the humanities and social sciences department.

Rodriguez said she believes she and the others named in the email were terminated because they spoke out against the college.

"I suspected that it was because I was active at the Board meetings and because I was supporting the students in trying to keep the cuts from going

through," Rodriguez said. "That was the reason I was retaliated against."

Rodriguez said Sena should not have the authority to decide whether she is allowed to teach. Full-time faculty members should make those decisions.

"As you can see the vice president of advancement is clearly making academic hiring decisions, something which is far outside of his authority," Rodriguez wrote.

In response Sena said, "What we have is certainly a list of faculty whose either professionalism or time in the classroom may not be at the level of expectations that we have here for adjunct faculty and therefore are not going to be considered for adjunct work in the future."

Sena would not elaborate further.

Rodriguez said she still does not know why she was not approved to teach at Northern. She is barred from employment there and is not currently teaching.



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